Kennedys vs. LBJ At Dallas: True Story

By PAUL HEALY
Of The News Washington Bureau

While Mrs. John F. Kennedy won her battle yesterday to delete emotional passages about herself from Look magazine's forthcoming articles on the assassination of her husband, the critical reference to President Johnson in the manuscript remain untouched.

New Disclosures

- It was President Kennedy himself—not Lyndon Johnson—who wanted to make the trip to Dallas.
- Johnson treated Mrs. Kennedy with "utmost concern" rather than callous rudeness.
- Johnson refused to talk for William Manchester's book because he considered it strictly a "Kennedy project."

Some of these passages about Johnson's behavior in the wake of the harrowing tragedy in Dallas three years ago are controversial, and they are expected to aggravate the already strained relations between Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

The Kennedy family is known to be concerned about the anti-Johnson flavor of William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President" (Harper & Row), on which the Look series is based, especially since the Kennedys handpicked Manchester as a kind of court historian of the assassination. But in demanding that the Manchester manuscripts be sanitized, on the ground he had broken an agreement to leave final approval to them, the former First Lady and the Senator did not ask for removal of any incidents pertaining to President Johnson.

This has caused some Kennedy-watchers in Washington to

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A concerned Lyndon Johnson turned to console Jacqueline Kennedy after LBJ was sworn in as President aboard Air Force One, following assassination of John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22. 1963.

A Victory in Her Bag, Jackie Will Take a Trip

By RICHARD MATHIEU

Mrs. John F. Kennedy prepared yesterday to fly with her two children to the isle of Antigua in the British West Indies on Monday to get away from the nightmarish literary battle she fought with publishers of "The Death of the President" to protect her privacy.

Total victory appeared imminent for Jackie, as her lawyers met secretly with counsel for author William Manchester and Harper & Row in an attempt to reach agreement on the 300,000-word book.

The publishing firm was expected to follow Look magazine's lead in making changes demanded by Mrs. Kennedy in the text. Look announced it had agreed to delete or change 1,600 words of the 80,000-word serialization scheduled to hit the newsstands Jan. 10.

Jackie fought to delete portions of the manuscript which she felt dealt with her most personal feelings and those of her children, Caroline, 9, and John Jr. 6.

Harper & Row's chief counsel, Edward S Greenbaum, indicated there would be an out-of-court settlement. After he heard of the Look agreement, Greenbaum said the publishers "will be very glad" to settle the controversy with Mrs. Kennedy along the lines of her out-of-court agreement with Look.

A source close to the Kennedys said the 300,000-word book is nearly four times longer than the magazine serialization and might take a while longer to work out an agreement.

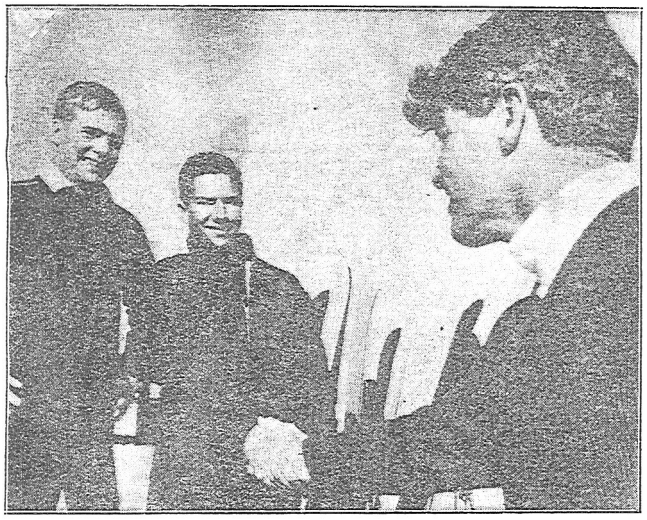
Harper & Row plans to publish the book in April.

The lawyers in the case met with Supreme Court Justice Saul S. Streit for nearly half an hour in the judge's chambers yesterday. On the application of all parties, Streit granted permission to delay any court action until Tuesday. The answers to Mrs. Kennedy's request to bar publication were due today.

A statement from Mrs. Kennedy's attorney, Simon Rifkind, said the extra time was granted so negotiations could continue. And, if they turned out to be "unsuccessful," the court could set a new hearing date.

The publishing industry was awash with reports that the deleted passages will probably appear in contraband versions of the book. It was reported that a counterfeit edition is now circulating in the city.

Look magazine reported it would be able to correct page proofs and make the necessary deletions and changes so as not to delay the magazine's Jan. 10 publication.



(Associated Press Wirephotos)

Sen. Robert Kennedy greets youths attending ski training camp at Sun Valley, Idaho. RFK lunched with group, then joined them for a ski run down Mount Baldy.

How LBJ Was Blocked on Leaving the Plane

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tell one another that "Bobby Kennedy won't shed many tears" if the Manchester stories worsen Johnson's fast-falling popularity.

Like others covering the White House and national Democratic conventions, I had long observed that there was no love lost between the Kennedy and Johnson groups. Those of us who were in Dallas watched it come to a poignant climax in the instantaneous shift in power from one to the other.

The Look articles will run the risk of reflecting not only on Johnson but on the sense of chic in Texas women as well. Relating the Kennedy's preparation for the trip Manchester quotes the President of telling Jackie he wanted to pick out her dress for the visit himself because he wanted to show up "the cheap Texas broads." Kennedy then personally selected the strawberry-colored suit, a Paris creation, which was to be stained with his own blood.

Ironically — and contrary to Manchester and some other observers—Johnson, in the hours and days following the assassination, was the very model of what a new President should be. This conclusion is based on interviews I have had with the assorted officials who were aboard "Air Force One" on its flight from Dallas to Washington with the new President, the dead President and the emotionally shattered widow.

It's Not the Way The Book Reads

Yet that is not the way Johnson comes out of Manchester's typewriter, according to persons who have read the manuscript. At best the President comes through as insensitive and at worst as boorishly eager to take over. And this version is taken, of course, to be the Kennedy family's.

As originally written, Manchester's treatment of the new President was even rougher. The Look editors persuaded him to tone it down some, pointing out that the author may have been subconsciously taking it out on Johnson because Johnson had refused to talk to him in the way Jackie did. Manchester had been distraught over his failure to get the President to sit for an interview. His book was, after all, intended to become the bible on the events surrounding the Dallas tragedy and he realized it would not be complete without Johnson's cooperation.

In his almost frantic efforts to to swing an interview with the President, Manchester importuned Texas friends to intercede for him. But all efforts failed, and he had to be content with written questions and answers.

LBJ Stands on His Warren Testimony

Why did Johnson bar the door? White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers said recently that Johnson simply felt that the Manchester book was a "Kennedy project from start to finish" and he saw no reason to be a party to it. George Reedy, who was White House secretary at the time, recalls that Johnson felt he had told his story to the Warren Commission and preferred to stand on that.

Manchester pictures Johnson largely through the eyes of members of the Dallas entourage who were fanatically loyal to the dead President and who, in their shock, resented the necessarily fast takeover of his successor. Manchester, who had written an admiring biography of Kennedy, clearly identifies with these reactions, say some persons who have read his manuscript.

Manchester reportedly pictures Kennedy staffers as blaming Johnson for the Kennedy tragedy because Texas was his state and he had persuaded Kennedy to go there. But Manchester errs in reporting that Kennedy was reluctant to make the trip, both Johnson and Kennedy aids told me recently.

The real purpose of the planned two-day visit to San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas and Austin—not admitted at the time by the White House —was to bring together warring factions of the Democratic Party in Texas. Gov. John Connally and Texas' senior Senator, Ralph Yarborough, were feuding, and Johnson was somewhere in between them.

Party Split Upsets Kennedy

Kennedy was upset about a party split in a key state which he had barely carried, even with Johnson on the ticket, in 1960. He was willing to do whatever he could to heal the wound and, if possible, to improve his own popularity by showing himself in the South. Johnson, however, thought the trip would be more timely if it came somewhat closer to the 1964 elections. And Connally, for his part, resented the fact that the Kennedy visit would be used to try to pressure him into making peace with Yarborough. (According to Manchester, Connally figured he could manipulate the trip so as to come out on top.)

Manchester's story makes much of the tensions between the Kennedy and Johnson staffs resulting from the abrupt transfer of power. Several of those who rode Air Force One on its sad journey back to Washington now say he has exaggerated those tensions. Part of Manchester's report on the scene in the airplane was based on his 10 hours of taped interviews with Mrs. Kennedy, who was understandably in a trance-like state that prevented her from being a reliable witness of what went on.

Fast Action to Insure Continuity of Rule

According to Manchester, LBJ's advisers were continually urging him to take steps to insure a continuity of government, and these steps were resented by the Kennedyites as being unseemly. For example Johnson's haste to get out of Dallas and onto the Presidential plane——as he certainly should have done—is apparently made to sound as if he had captured the plane, in the Kennedyites' view. They were "shocked and infuriated," according to Manchester, to find LBJ ensconced in the presidential cabin when they arrived with the coffin.

On two other moves, Johnson is made to sound slightly devious. Manchester's account has the new President telephoning Attorney General Kennedy and suggesting that he be sworn in right there in Texas rather than waiting until Air Force One returns to Washington. The Attorney General gives a hesitant, "Well, sure," reply, according to this account, but then Johnson tells others that the Attorney General himself suggested the swearing-in take place in Texas.

Manchester dwells on this relatively minor incident for about 20 pages of the book manuscript, according to one who has read it. The author also makes much of the fact that Johnson first thought of addressing Congress on the day after JFK's funeral, at the urging of his advisers, and that he put the speech off for an additional day at a suggestion relayed to him from the Attorney General.

Precedence in Leaving The Funeral Plane

In his manuscript, Manchester also makes a point of Johnson being blocked off when he attempted to emerge from the plane beside the coffin as it was being unloaded in Washington. The so-called Irish Mafia, led by two Kennedy aids, Lawrence O'Brien and Kenneth O'Donnell, did the blocking, presumably because they resented Johnson's pushiness. Malcolm Kilduff, acting White House press secretary for the Dallas trip, recalls it this way:

"President Johnson did feel that he should accompany Mrs. Kennedy from Air Force One as the body of the late President was being brought down the steps. When we arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, we found the forklift waiting there, rather than a pair of steps. The people, and these were members of the Kennedy staff, plus certain Secret Service agents, had so filled the forklift that it was not possible for President Johnson to get on.

"It wasn't possible. I jumped off the plane and rode down on the forklift and almost got caught in the gears."

Kilduff says he would not care to speculate on "whether this was a deliberate effort or not," but that "certainly, if it was deliberate, it worked, because . . . it was impossible for President Johnson to get off the plane with the casket and pay his respects to Mrs. Kennedy before the ambulance departed."

Says Johnson Showed 'The Utmost Concern'

In an opinion shared by other impartial observers aboard the plane, Kilduff says; "I can't help but feel he (Johnson) showed the utmost concern for Mrs. Kennedy, all members of the Kennedy family, and the whole Kennedy party that was with us. Once he got off the plane, he continued to show that concern. There was no grossness of his part, as has been implied by others in the recent past."

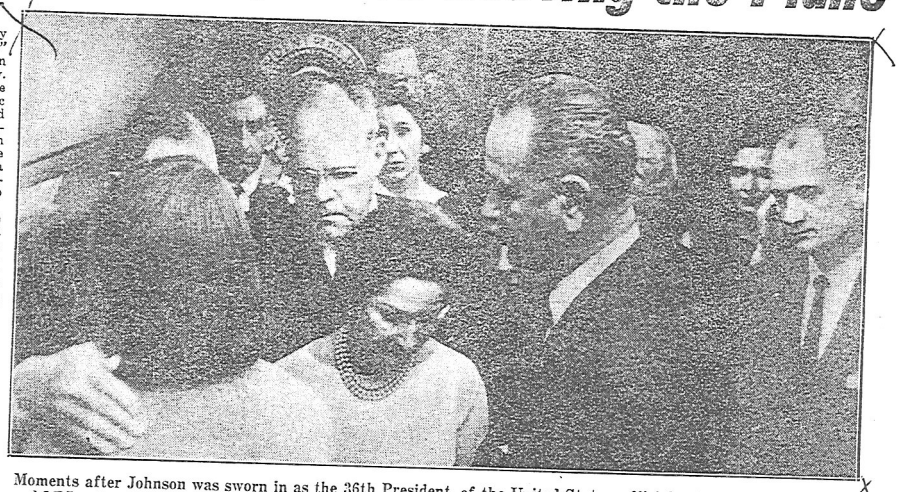
Kiduff added: "At a time like that, everyone was under a great deal of stress and strain, and a lot of things were said, and a lot of things were done that time would have healed."

One passenger on the plane at first refused to talk to Manchester — until told to do so by the Kennedy family — because he figured Manchester was out to "gut Johnson." If that was Manchester's intention, his book may boomerang.

One pro-Kennedy person who has read the Look series admits:

"The overwhelming public reaction may well be pro-Johnson. To some he will come through as an honest, practicing politician battered by conflicting winds in Texas. It sounds like the Kennedy loyalists never gave him a chance; it's as if they thought the man in the coffin was still President."

(Tomorrow: A glimpse at the steel will and independence that lie behind Jackie's gentle beauty—and explain her tough stand on the book.



Moments after Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States, officials—including Mrs. Johnson and LBJ—aboard the Presidential plane in Dallas gathered around the widowed Jacqueline to express their sympathy.

Writer Was There

Paul Healy of THE NEWS Washington Bureau writes with authority on the Kennedys. He was on the scene and reported the tragedy of the assassination as it unfolded in Dallas three years ago.

He was a friend of John F. Kennedy from the time he wrote the first national magazine article about him in 1953. And he covered the late President for THE NEWS all the years Kennedy was in Washington.

Her stockings and dress stained with her husband's blood, Jackie, followed by brother-in-law Robert F. Kennedy then Attorney General, prepared to enter ambulance bearing JFK's body after arrival at Andrews Air Force Base from Dallas, the evening of Nov. 22, 1963.